

MISCALCULATION OF WELLS.

BY R. G. MERRILL.

You see, Jim Thompson left him in the stockyards on the tenth. That was in St. Paul. And Jim he started for home that same night without thinking of anything going to happen which he didn't expect it would.

But the nex' mornin' the nigger porter come up—Jim had give him a dollar the night before, an' he says: "Want to see the papah, sah?" an' he give it to him an' he give him a quarter, which was mighty good interest f'r that nigger.

An' Jim he turned over the paper an' he see an ad. in it 'bout a fellow was killed in the stockyards the night before without no name on him. The paper it give a description of him, an' it says: "The unfortunate individual had the appearance of a New Englander."

That made Jim kind of hot—Jim's from Maine himself—an' he says: "Them newspaper men thinks they're smart, an' jes' then it struck him, an' he says: "I wonder if it could 'a' ben Fred?"

So he goes back an' goes over it all again, an' it did fit awful well—blue eyes an' medium tall an' sandy hair an' looked like he come from Maine. An' Jim he felt pretty bad, an' he thought about it a lot on the way out—but o' course he wasn't sure it was him.

Well, when he gets home, pretty near the first person he meets was Mrs. McSwain, an' she says to him, mighty sweet: "An' didn't you see anything of Fred while you was away, Mr. Thompson?" She was a right nice little woman, too, an' everybody said Fred hadn't no sort of reason for holdin' her down on the dough the way he sure done.

An' Jim tells her 'bout seein' him in the stockyards an' him sendin' love an' a lot like that; but he never says a word about the paper, an' I think he was jes' right.

All the same he couldn't help worryin', thinkin' about bein' the last person to see poor Fred alive, an' he talked about it to most everybody he met, an' the boys all to their wives, but Mrs. Mac she never got a hint.

They was a fellow named Wells there that time, an' it worried him awful. He always was wantin' to get his pawson other people's business, an' see how they took things. He took on like Fred had ben own brother to him to think Mrs. Mac didn't know, an' he was always droppin' in on her an' followin' her round to be on han' when somebody told. But they wasn't none of us goin' to tell, an' we thought jes' to let her go on she'd come to it kind of gradual an' maybe drop on of herself. But Wells couldn't see it that way.

So he was right on han' when she come to the post office one day and steps up to the window f'r mail. When she got her mail she looks kind of solemn, an' she says: "I wonder what's the matter with Fred," she says. "You right sure you ain't dropped a letter?" she says to Miss Binns.

Miss Binns kep' the office f'r a spell there, an' she turned all kinds of colors, an' the rest of us Wells begin to slide f'r the door; but Wells see he'd got to tell her then if he ever done it, an' he says to her: "Madam, when did you last hear from your husband?"

"Why, let me see," says she, "I got a letter the day before Mr. Thompson got home. Why, it's ben a week," an' she looks kind of scared.

"Oh, well, a week ain't long," Miss Binns says. "Lots o' men don't write home onct a month."

"Oh," says she, "But Fred writes every other day." Which maybe he did, an' maybe he didn't; but Wells he sees his chance, an' he up to her an' tells her about the paper.

I don't think he meant to tell her all about it, only onct he got started he couldn't stop; an' she never says a word, jes' kep' her eyes on him an' kep' gettin' whiter an' whiter; an' when he runs out o' talk, she kind o' swallows hard, an' drops over. Maybe Wells wasn't some scared! He yells out f'r Miss Binns, an' she run out an' poured water on her, an' Wells he held her head an' Jim Thompson rubbed her hands, an' between 'em all they brung her round—an' then of all the times! I guess Wells see

enough takin' on right then to last him f'r one while.

First she'd cry an' then she'd laugh an' then she'd stiff out an' faint some more, an' all the time them people workin' over her an' givin' her camphire an' salts an' peppermint, an' pourin' water on her an' puttin' cold to her head an' hot to her feet, an' rubbin' her hands an' lettin' down her hair. You never see the like!

Pretty soon she wants to go home, so they bundles her up in a shawl an' starts her off with Wells on one side an' Jim on the other. But she hadn't no more 'n' got out of the door till she begins to cry—sets right down in the road to cry, too. They got her started on again, an' 'bout a rod down she goes in a faint. Wells gets down on the sidewalk beside her, an' begins talkin' to her; but Jim he goes off an' gets his wagon, an' between 'em they gets her up on it, an' off they goes, she a-screamin' an' faintin' an' tryin' to throw herself off, an' they two holdin' her on.

When they got there, they was some women, an' Jim left an' run all the way back to town, an' when he got in he jes' says: "Oh, Lord!" an' he never says another word. But Wells allowed now he'd started he'd see her through, an' when he come back he says: "Praise the Lord, she is quiet now, an' goin' east on the night train to get her husband's body, as she'd ought to have gone a week ago," says he, lookin' at Jim.

So Wells gets a ticket f'r her, an' some of the women packs her things, an' as soon as it was good an' dark she come down an' picked out some crape an' mournin' things an' a big crape veil. Course it was a little late to be startin', but we all thought she'd better go; an' as f'r the blacks, why Mrs. Mac she hadn't had no new clothes to speak of while Fred was alive; an' this time we give her good measure. Jim sent word to some friends to look out f'r her, an' Wells telegraphed the police to hol' the body of Fred McSwain, which was wanted in Montana; an' among us we got her off pretty comfortable.

Now, Jake Wells was sheriff in Big Elk that time, but he wasn't no relation to the preacher, an' he'd been away to Portland visitin' his girl. He come in on the same train Mrs. Mac left on, an' jest as the train was pullin' out they brings him a telegram from St. Paul, sayin' to arrest Fred McSwain, who was comin' in on No. 2, an' hold till further orders.

Jake was some surprised, but he knewed a lot of the boys went on a tear when they was away, so he just waited round. He didn't say nothin' to the men at the station either, f'r that wasn't his style—jes' loafed round the dark end of the platform by himself an' waited f'r the train.

When it come, sure enough, off steps Fred, 'bout as much alive as he'd any call to be. Jake he comes up out of his dark, an' he says: "Say, Fred, I'm sorry, but I guess I'll have to run you in."

Fred he jumps back, an' he says: "I'd like to see you do it. What I ben doin'?" an' he makes a hit at him, bein' a mean-tempered fellow, but jolly.

That made Jake kind o' hot, an' he says: "I don't know what you ben up to, but on you go," an' he pulls out a gun, an' Fred moves.

Nex' mornin' it was all over town how Fred had ben 'rested f'r knifin' a man in St. Paul, an' what a pity it was f'r Mrs. Mac, an' maybe she hadn't come to the en' of her troubles yet, poor woman, an' it must 'a' ben pretty bad f'r him to let his own people think him dead, an' all that sort o' talk, some sayin' one thing an' some sayin' another; but I see Wells wasn't sayin' a word; an' every time they'd begin to talk about it, he'd kind of edge out to one side. He kep' gettin' worse an' worse, too, till toward evenin' he couldn't keep still. He jes' kep' edgin' round the stove, an' settin' down an' gettin' up, like as if there was nettles under him. An' along dusk I see him goin' up the hill to the courthouse where the jail was in the back part, jes' hittin' the high places on the road with his hat jammed down on his eyes.

Fred an' Jake had made it up 'bout the arrest, an' they was two or three of the boys up there, tryin' to cheer Fred up. Fred 'd jes' ben tellin' 'em how whisky never went to his head, an' he must 'a' ben drugged that last night in St. Paul, when Wells come runnin'

into the passage outside the cells where they was bars between. He was clean out o' breath when he got that fur, an' he jes' leaned back against the wall and panted.

"Oh," he says—"oh, I'm 'traid there's a mistake here, Mr. McSwain. I'm all out o' breath, gentlemen, but I'm afraid I'm the innocent cause—that is, I got a telegram. It's not very definite, of course."

"In answer to message, Fred McSwain in custody at Big Elk to answer charge."

When he begin to talk Fred jumps up, an' when he got through, he makes one dive across the room at him, an' if they hadn't 'a' ben bars between, he'd 'a' had something to stay in jail f'r. But he couldn't only get his arms through the bars, an' when Wells stood fat against the passage he was a little too fur off.

"Nobody could feel much worse about it," says Wells, an' he didn't breathe out much to say it, neither, "but I meant it all for the best, an' after I started your wife off—"

"What!" says Fred.

"Oh," says Wells, "ain't our kind friends told you? She felt she must go f'r your body, but I saw to her startin', an' I got her a first-class ticket—"

"What!" says Fred again, an' he couldn't find another word to say; he jest stood there clawin' the air.

One of the fellows in the cell was the man which fitted Mrs. Mac out with her blacks, an' he was a josh-er, too.

"Say, Fred," he calls out, "I didn't like to bother you sooner, but now your troubles is over, they's a little account between us," an' he reaches it out of his pocket.

An' when Fred see a bill f'r mournin' he was the maddest man!—San Francisco Argonaut.

BELGIANS LIKE FESTIVAL.

Carnival of the Dancing Gilles of Binche Proves to Be Great Attraction.

The persistent manner in which Belgians cling to their medieval festivals and traditions is a characteristic national trait well known to those familiar with the Flemish and Walloon provinces. The survival of such popular fetes as that of the carnival procession of the dancing Gilles at Binche attests the innate love of Belgians for these picturesque vestiges of their forefathers' civilization.

The festival of the dancing Gilles of Binche is in many respects the quaintest of these popular customs. This festival takes place on Mardi Gras at the Binche, a town of Hainaut. The carnival of Binche has always been held in high repute by the Belgians, but without its Gilles it would not be substantially different from that of Rome, Nice and other towns.

These Gilles, or dancing men, who form the glory of the Binche carnival, are characterized by their readresses and lumps. The head-dress is most elaborate and striking. In shape it resembles the old-time top hat of our great-grandfathers. The hat is surmounted with magnificent ostrich feathers from three to four feet in length, which give the wearers the appearance of giants. From each hat, besides, flow several wide, variegated ribbons, while the Gilles' trousers are bedecked with trimmings of real lace and ribbons to match those of the hat. Every Gilles wears a mask and a silk belt, from which hang small bells.

Japanese Taste.

In the Tsurezure-gusa, a Japanese collection of short sketches, anecdotes and essays on various subjects, by Kenko-Boshi, we find the following enumeration of things that are in bad taste:

Too much furniture in one's living room.

Too many pens in a stand.

Too many Buddhas in a private shrine.

Too many rocks, trees and herbs in a garden.

Too many children in a house.

Too many words when men meet.

Too many books in a bookcase there can never be, nor too much litter in a dust-heap.

At Bacon Ridge.

Editor—So you want a position as weather reporter, eh? What do you know about reporting the weather?

Hiram Boots—What do I know? Gosh, I've had the biggest corns in this here county.—Chicago Daily News.

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